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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001157

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, EB/TPP/BTA, AND EB/IFD/OIA
STATE PASS USTR FOR SHAUN DONNELLY
DUBAI FOR ATO DWILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ETRD ECON EAGR AE
SUBJECT: ECONOMY MINISTER SHEIKHA LUBNA ON IPR, TIFA PLUS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 10, Ambassador and Econchief met with UAE Minister of Economy Sheikha Lubna Al-Qasimi to follow-up on the June 29 TIFA plus meeting in Washington. Sheikha Lubna told Ambassador that she thought that it was an "excellent meeting." She expressed interest in deepening the relationship, suggesting that the U.S. and the UAE sign a joint economic agreement providing for senior-level consultations. She told Ambassador that Dubai Customs has seized 75 shipments of counterfeit U.S. products during the 2006-2007 time frame. She also expressed interest in cooperation and information-sharing on Halal certification standards, but noted that the General Secretariat of Municipalities, rather than her ministry, has the lead on food labeling. End Summary.

Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Actions

¶2. (SBU) Sheikha Lubna told Ambassador that on her return from the June 29 meeting, she had instructed Dubai Customs to give her more information on actions taken against counterfeit products. In response, Dubai Customs reported that there had been 400 cases related to seizures of counterfeit products (including compact discs and car parts) in 2006. Many of these seizures were customs seizures. Dubai Customs also provided her with a statistical breakdown of seizures of counterfeits of U.S. products over the 2006-07 timeframe, which Sheikha Lubna shared with Ambassador. (Note: The information does not include size or value of seizures. End note.) The document showed the following:

-- Nike: 16 seizures
-- Diesel: 12 seizures
-- Polo: 11 seizures
-- HP: 9 seizures
-- Phillip Morris: 9 seizures
-- Ford: 5 seizures
-- Burberry: 5 seizures
-- AC Delco: 4 seizures
-- GM: 4 seizures

¶3. (SBU) Sheikha Lubna added that, during the last six months, the Ministry of Economy and Dubai Customs established an electronic link, giving Dubai Customs a direct connection to the ministry's trade mark database. She stressed that firms having complaints about copyright violations could contact the Ministry of Economy and the Federal Customs Authority to follow-up. Ambassador suggested that Embassy invite the American Business Groups of Dubai and Abu Dhabi to an early September meeting, where Ministry of Economy and Federal Customs officials could discuss IPR enforcement, an idea strongly supported by Sheikha Lubna. On July 11,

Econchief contacted Mohammed Al-Mehari the head of the Federal Customs Authority, who expressed tentative interest in the idea. Post will follow-up with UAEG and with American business groups.

Standards

¶4. (SBU) Sheikha Lubna also emphasized her interest in exchanging information on standards issues, especially on Halal slaughtering. She noted that she had seen occasional "mix-ups" relating to Halal certifications of products containing pork products from Europe, Australia, and the U.S.

She noted that Muslims could react "emotionally" to this particular mistake, and that she was looking for ways to clarify the certification process. She noted that National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce President David Hamod had expressed interest in cooperating on this issue during his recent visit to Abu Dhabi. She said that she would need to get buy-in from the General Secretariat of Municipalities, which had the lead on food certification issues.

Companies Law Changes Dragging

¶5. (SBU) In response to Ambassador's question, Sheikha Lubna admitted that revisions to the Companies' law were "dragging." UAE Prime Minister/Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum had instructed her to consult widely on the revisions. Although all of the emirate level departments of economy had approved the changes, she was waiting on the Dubai Chamber of Commerce (DCCI). The head of the DCCI had told her that he would talk about it after the summer. Sheikha Lubna noted wryly that she still heard

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complaints about the revisions that had been made to the Agencies law.

Joint Economic Framework Agreement

¶6. (SBU) Sheikha Lubna suggested that the U.S. and the UAE sign a joint economic agreement. She explained that the UAEG had several such agreements (under a Ministry of Foreign Affairs umbrella) providing for ministerial level meetings. She suggested that a formal agreement would send a message to the private sector about the close U.S. - UAE economic ties and help push back on negative reactions to the suspension of the FTA talks.

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